

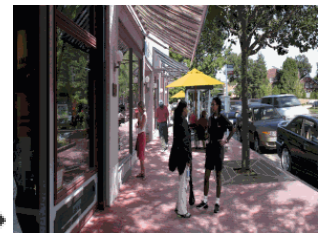
CCD BULLETIN

Issues in Coastal Community Development

FOCUS: FORM-BASED CODES

One of the cornerstones of “smart growth” is promoting increased density in existing urban centers, so that land at the periphery can be conserved for environmental and recreational purposes. Conventional (“Euclidean”) land use planning, focused on the separation of uses and maximum densities for each zone, often presents an obstacle to such community revitalization efforts. An alternative approach being implemented by many jurisdictions is form-based coding, which emphasizes design and scale. Form-based codes can be used to not only allow, but to encourage and guide the development of mixed use, walkable neighborhoods.

Once a community has developed its vision for how it wants to evolve, via design charrettes or other planning exercises, it may become clear that this vision cannot be realized without changing existing land use regulations. Form-based codes can be adopted as a replacement for the existing zoning ordinance, as an optional alternative to existing zoning, or as an overlay zone for certain areas targeted for development or redevelopment.



[All pictures from Arlington, VA website]

The unique nature of form-based codes is captured in the following basic elements – typically these standards will vary based on the specific area’s designation, for example as a city center or outlying area:

Building Envelope Standards set criteria for acceptable building size, including ranges for height, width and depth; location on the lot; and permitted and/or required building elements, such as storefronts, balconies, parking areas, and street walls. The building’s siting is largely defined by the **Required Building Line**, which specifies where building fronts are placed. Its counterpart in conventional zoning is the setback – but whereas a setback dictates a *minimum* distance from the street, the Required Building Line establishes a *set* distance, helping to create a pedestrian-friendly environment with a traditional neighborhood feel. The Building Envelope Standards may also designate broad categories for use – such as requiring commercial uses on the ground floor of main street areas.

Architectural Standards direct the use of certain materials, configurations, and construction techniques, in order to maintain a unified and/or traditional appearance, particularly in historic areas.

Streetscape Standards may include requirements for planting trees, installing lampposts, etc. on or near each building site – e.g., at least one tree every thirty feet along the side of the lot facing the main street.

Form-based codes can be an effective method for ensuring that development occurs in a manner consistent with the community’s vision for the neighborhood’s future. They have been implemented successfully in various forms in several areas, including Arlington, Virginia; Austin, Texas; Columbus, Ohio; Petaluma, California; and Macon, Georgia. (See links in the *Community Tool Shed* section on page 2 for examples.)



RECOMMENDED READING

Smart Growth Zoning Codes: A Resource Guide

By Steve Tracy

Based on the Local Government Commission's research of more than 150 "smart growth" zoning codes from across the nation, this guidebook will help planners design a zoning code that encourages the construction of walkable, mixed use neighborhoods and the revitalization of existing places. Each chapter analyzes a critical issue – such as design, streets and parking – and highlights exemplary codes from across the country. The guide comes with a CD-ROM containing sample zoning codes and other resources. This document is not available electronically (but see below for the Executive Summary version). To purchase (\$25), go to:

www.smartgrowth.org/library/articles.asp?art=691&res=1280.

Overcoming Obstacles to Smart Growth through Code Reform

This 8-page fact sheet summarizes the highlights of the *Resource Guide* described above. It features basics on codes for mixed use and transit areas, solutions for parking, and design elements for buildings and streets. To download, go to:

www.lgc.org/freepub/PDF/Land_Use/sg_code_exec_summary.pdf.



CCD HAPPY HOUR

If you're planning to be in Maine for Sea Grant Week, please join us for happy hour on Monday, June 6, beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the Samoset Resort bar. Hope to see you there!

(If you can't join us in Maine, try to catch us at CZ05 in New Orleans this July – details on a CCD social event to follow...)



COMMUNITY TOOL SHED

SmartCode: A Comprehensive Form-Based Planning Ordinance from Duany Plater-Zyberk

<http://tndtownpaper.com/images/SmartCode6.5.pdf>

The SmartCode is a model planning ordinance that any jurisdiction can adapt according to local needs and preferences to provide a foundation for a form-based code. The code incorporates the Duany "transect" approach, which bases zoning and applicable design guidelines on the location of the area in relation to the urban center and the rural countryside. This document provides detailed sample language for various types of plans, from regional to community to building scale.

(The link above is to an abbreviated version of the SmartCode; the complete code in electronic, editable format can be purchased from Duany Plater-Zyberk – see contact information at <http://dpz.com/company.htm>.)

Examples of Form-Based Codes:

Arlington, Virginia

www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/CPHD/forums/columbia/current/CPHDForumsColumbiaCurrentCurrentStatus.aspx

This code was adopted to promote revitalization along the Columbia Pike traffic corridor. Although it is optional, the increase in allowable density and a streamlined review process provide incentives to developers to select the form-based code.

Petaluma, California

<http://cityofpetaluma.net/cdd/cpsp.html>

The City of Petaluma used the Duany SmartCode as the foundation for this form-based code. The code supports the redevelopment of a 400-acre area near the historic downtown into a pedestrian-oriented theater district.

The CCD Bulletin is edited and distributed by the National Sea Grant Office. But for the most meaningful content, we're relying on you. We're especially interested in sharing your stories of successful (or less than successful) coastal community development projects. Please send your suggestions, submissions and insights to: Amy.Zimmerling@noaa.gov.